Fertile land under cultivation

†1391. SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the total fertile land actually under cultivation in the country;

(b) the extent of fertile agricultural land acquired or proposed to be acquired for Special Economic Zones, as on date; and

(c) whether shrinking of fertile land following the land acquisition would not adversely affect food security and distribution in country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) As per available estimate, the total land under cultivation in the country is 182.57 million ha. in 2005-06 for which the figures are available.

(b) The total land area in the 366 valid formal approvals for setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) is about 48890 hectares, of this, about 21400 hectares of lands were already in the ownership/possession of State Industrial Development Corporations which were acquired for industrial purposes by the State Governments much prior to the introduction of the SEZ policy.

(c) As little area has been consumed for setting of SEZs as compared to the total cultivable land in the country, the adverse effect is expected to be quite minimal so far.

Neem project

1392. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Phase II of the Neem project has been developed and launched in September, 2006;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether commercial production of the project has commenced; and

(d) if so, the installed capacity and the target fixed for 2007-08?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI B.K.HANDIQUE): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Phase II of the Neem project has commenced in October 2006. The objective of the project is to try environment friendly, neem seed based bio-pesticide especially on commercial plantations like Tea, Coffee and Spices. The project would provide the scientific basis for wider acceptance of the simple low cost technology of neem based pesticides for use in different crops as an alternative to chemical pesticides.

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi